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REMARKS

Claims 1-23 are now pending.

The Examiner objected to Claims 4-5, 7, and 15, as containing the informalities set forth on Page 2 of the Office Action. For clarity, these claims have been amended without narrowing their scope.

Claims 1, 4-8, and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Tsuda, Japanese Patent No. JP-11083868, (Tsuda). Claims 11 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tsuda in view of Shibuya et al., U.S. Patent Publication, US2004/0057872, (Shibuya).

A key feature of the present invention defined in Claim 1 is to store output values of a pressure sensor during an operation of dispensing a sample time-serially, to carry out multi-variable analysis using both a reference database consisting of time-serial pressure sensor output values when the sample is normally sucked or ejected by the probe, and comparison data of time-serial output values of the pressure sensor, and to determine an abnormality in the dispensing operation as a result of the comparison.

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According to this feature of the present invention, various types of abnormal dispensing can be discriminated and detected. See, for example, the abnormalities resulting in the graphs shown in Figures 2B-2I and described in page 4, line 25 - page 7, line 20.

Tsuda, discussed on page 2, line 26 of the specification, discloses the detection of pressure at a single point after the end of the sucking operation, and comparison of the single detected value with a threshold to determine the occurrence of clogging. Tsuda does not disclose to detect pressures time-serially, or to carry out multi-variable analysis of both the time-serial values with reference time-serial data.

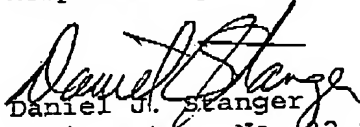
Because of the differences between the invention as claimed and the disclosure of Tsuda, the present invention is able to discriminate and detect the variety of abnormalities discussed above, whereas Tsuda would be unable to distinguish types of abnormalities, and would further be unable to detect certain abnormalities whose characteristic outputs do not coincide with the detected output caused by clogging. Further, certain false positives that would result according to Tsuda are eliminated by the structure and method set forth in the present claims.

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In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks,
Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the
rejections and allowance of the claims.

Respectfully submitted,


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